ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PORTABLE HANDBOOK

- Best design practices from start to finish
- Filled with interviews, bulleted guidelines, & case studies
- Over 70 nationally recognized contributors
- Explicit guidance on integrating site, program, & technical issues

Andy Pressman
Also by Andy Pressman

- Professional Practice 101: A Compendium of Business and Management Strategies in Architecture
- The Fountainheadache: The Politics of Architect-Client Relations
- Integrated Space Systems: Vocabulary for Room Language

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To Jacob Pressman, who is a constant reminder to view the world with fresh and positive perspective, humor, intelligence, and above all, playfulness, joy, and wonder.
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This is a guide to the uniquely provocative and often idiosyncratic process of creating meaningful architectural form. So deep is the mystique of the architectural design process that few have had the courage or insight to write about it. A feeling persists among many in the profession that design is an almost magical pursuit that defies analysis or rational discussion. But every architect, from those whose work adorns the magazines each month to those who only read the magazines, can become better at design, and this is what Andy Pressman, through this book, sets out to help us do.

Pressman identifies and explains the core issues of design, all the while keeping an eye on the elements of delight and mystery that make the design process so fascinating to those of us who engage in it. He maintains a sharp focus on the magical aspects of design, revealing their secrets to us so that we may become better designers. He tells us how to keep our minds free and open as we work. He helps us to realize our full potential as designers.

This is a book to be read slowly, a few pages at a time, so as to absorb its lessons as completely as possible. It is a book to be read again and again, a book whose pages will gradually become dog-eared and graphite-smudged, a comforting companion for the times when a design concept refuses to emerge as well as the times when we experience the euphoria of developing a brilliant scheme. For the seasoned practitioner, it will refresh the imagination, provide outstanding new tools for design, and sharpen existing tools. For the novice, it will furnish the elements of a personal design method, extend the range of the imagination, and help to develop mental flexibility. For readers of all levels of experience, it will put temporary troubles in per-
Engaging Your Client
With Kathryn Anthony

- Jargon-laden speech directed at the cognoscenti: this is probably something to avoid for clear communication with your client! Education about architecture goes hand in hand with the presentation of your ideas (as well as operating throughout the design process), as Kathryn Anthony so eloquently states in Supplement 5.2. Education can also be viewed as a natural extension of a professional’s overall responsibility to both clients and the public.

Anthony talks about essential strategies to engage in constructive dialogue, when to be appropriately assertive for the best interests of the project and its constituents, and how to be graceful in preserving design integrity without compromising core values of client needs and preferences, among other things.

Kathryn Anthony

Kathryn Anthony, PhD, is a professor in the School of Architecture, Department of Landscape Architecture, and the Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of the critically acclaimed book, Design Juries on Trial: The Renaissance of the Design Studio (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991). She holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley.

- As an architect, communicating with your clients is one of your most challenging tasks. Unfortunately, with the exception of graphic communications, little is taught about oral and written communications skills in architecture school. And all too often, architects assume that they will acquire these skills through trial and error. The problem is that no matter how talented a designer you may be, too many errors will drive your firm right out of business. Conversely, success in this arena leads to satisfied clients, repeat business, and terrific references for future work. Improving your communication skills with clients is definitely a worthwhile investment.

It is essential that you stay in touch with your clients, as they say in Chicago, “early and often.” Discuss and agree upon the scope of work, negotiate your fees, establish a starting date and a schedule, and do your best to stick to it throughout your working relationship. If your schedule changes and you are running behind, call your clients to inform them immediately. From their perspective, simply knowing you will be late is better than being left in the dark, not having heard from you at all.

Presenting design schemes to your clients is one of your most important tasks. Paul Revere Williams (1894–1980), who ran one of the most successful African American architectural practices in the U.S., earned many of his clients through his presentation techniques. Once clients were in his office, Williams asked them what kind of budget they had to spend. He would then reply that he rarely took on projects with that low a figure, but that perhaps he could offer them some suggestions “free of charge.” This served as the bait that took them in. He would ask them to discuss what kind of “dream home” or building they had in mind. While he sat opposite them during their discussion, he adeptly began to sketch out their ideas—up side down. This enabled them to see their ideas immediately come to life literally from their own point of view. This unusual ability won Williams scores of clients, and he eventually became known as the “architect to the stars,” designing homes for such film luminaries as Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Betty Grable, Cary Grant, William Holden, and Frank Sinatra, among others. Today a myriad of computerized presentation techniques are available to help clients better visualize your designs. Use them whenever possible.

Giving clients ample opportunity to react to your designs while in progress is a key to professional success. Similarly, involving prospective building users as well as clients is even more valuable in the long run. Say your client is a large corporation, such as a health care provider. While the hospital administration may serve as your client, no doubt the perspectives of administration personnel will differ significantly from those of doctors, interns, residents, nurses, and other medical staff who use the building regularly. In addition, the experiences of patients and visitors who use the building irregularly,
Presentations

often as a result of life-threatening emergencies, are altogether different as well. Understanding how each type of user experiences the current medical environment as well as how each reacts to your prospective designs inevitably produces a better building. People are likely to be more satisfied with a new building or addition if they have been consulted in the design process. For a large institution, this can translate into increased productivity on the job, reduced absenteeism, less turnover, and lower costs.

How can you maximize the efficiency of your in-progress design presentations to clients and users? Here is some advice.

Before Your Presentation

- Prepare in advance. Understand your audience. Anticipate how much clients already know or do not know about your project. Select your words carefully, avoiding such architectural lingo as 
  *fenestration* or glazing (choose *windows* or *glass* instead), *building envelopes*, or *building skins*.
- Find out exactly how much time your clients plan to set aside for your meeting. Be aware of any schedule constraints they may have, and plan your presentation accordingly.
- Practice your presentation with coworkers. Have them ask you questions that mimic those that your clients will ask, and be prepared with answers. Ask them for feedback on how you come across.
- Schedule a time where a coworker can videotape your presentation. Watching yourself talk about your design is an experience like no other. You are likely to be your own worst critic. Listen carefully to what you say and how you say it. Are you using filler words, like *um, like, and you know?* We all do, but rarely are we aware of them. Watch your nonverbal behavior as well. Are you fidgeting, rocking back and forth from one foot to another, or jiggling keys? All these actions distract others from what you are trying to say. Once you are aware of them, you can keep yourself from falling into the habit.
**Presentations**

**During Your Presentation**

- Make it clear that your designs are still evolving, and that you want and need feedback at this stage.
- Annotate your drawings with short pieces of text highlighting major features of your design.
- Ask for audience participation in reviewing your work. For example, offer clients and/or users different-colored dots that they can place on your drawings. Use one color to signify an aspect of the design that they like, while another to indicate a feature they dislike. Use yet another color to highlight parts of the design that they do not understand.
- After hearing the participants' comments, repeat them to make sure you understood the audience's concerns correctly. Listening carefully is half the battle.
- Note down important points that your clients make to you. From their perspective, simply seeing you write down at least some of what they have to say shows that you have paid attention, rather than dismissed them.
- If you disagree with opinions of clients and users, don't become defensive. Instead, let them finish their points. Do not interrupt. If their views have merit, say so. If they're off the wall, be diplomatic. In any case, discuss their remarks along with your own viewpoint and the rationale behind it, and say that you will take their comments into consideration.
- Be sure to offer plenty of opportunity to ask questions: "Is there anything more you'd like to ask?" "What else would you like to know about what I have in mind?"
- Maintain eye contact. Make sure your body language indicates that you are interested in what clients are saying.
- In addition to your drawings and models, offer clients a portable version of your design that they can take home and study on their own. If possible, produce a Web site that they can access on their computers. Ask for their comments by a particular date and time.

**After Your Presentation**

- Delegate someone in your office to be in charge of monitoring and summarizing the feedback you receive. If you do not hear from clients, call and follow up to ensure that you receive their reactions.
- Be available to answer questions about your proposed design. Often clients will have more questions after they meet you, once they have a chance to digest your ideas.

Once your design is completed and the project is built, it is important that you continue to maintain contact with your clients. Don't just design and run. Make it clear to them that you are genuinely interested in learning about how their building is working. An excellent way to do this is by conducting a postoccupancy evaluation (POE). POEs can be done in a myriad of ways. In an academic setting, POEs may involve a series of studies spanning several months or even years. In fact, scores of publications have been written about how to conduct POEs, and many involve questionnaires and complex forms of data analysis. In a professional setting, however, rarely do you have the luxury of spending several months to conduct a POE, nor do you have the expertise. So, what to do? You can either hire someone to do the POE for you, or conduct an abbreviated version yourself. If you chose to hire an expert, consult your local university—preferably one that houses a department of architecture—and see if any one of its faculty, a class, or an independent study student is interested in helping you. Or you can contact the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) and find out the name of a local expert. You can contact EDRA on the World Wide Web at www.telepath.com/edra/home.html or via e-mail at edra@telepath.com.

Should you choose to conduct a short POE on your own, I suggest circulating a set of three simple questions among building users. (1) What do you like best about this building? (2) What do you like least about this building? (3) If you had the chance to redesign this building, what would you do differently? These three questions will generate a lively set of responses. Read them
and try to understand how widespread are the various sentiments expressed. If you are hearing the same complaints from several individuals, try to ascertain if in fact you can make any small-scale changes that could address some of these deficiencies. If they are impossible to address, keep them in mind for the next project.

In any case, taking the time to understand the extent to which clients and users are satisfied with your building, like communication skills themselves, is a worthwhile investment. It is an excellent way to earn client satisfaction and repeat business.

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**Trends in Reprographics, Printing, and Imaging**

*A Conversation with Jim Maitland*

Jim Maitland has worked with the Charrette Corporation, headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts, for over 20 years, and has been involved in all aspects of the company's reprographics and computing divisions. He earned his BA from Amherst College. Check Charrette’s Web site at www.charrette.com for interesting details.

**Pressman:** What has changed in the reprographic world in the last several years, and how have those changes influenced architectural design?

**Maitland:** So much of the design process is done on the computer that printing computer files is dominating the business. Diazo printing of construction documents is hereby officially obsolete, with the exception of a few old-timers who still draw by hand. Printing technology is not really reprographics.

Today, reproduction is all about output devices and options for printing from computer files.

**Pressman:** There are many variables in producing the highest-quality presentation output, ranging from the type of equipment used, the resolution, and most important, perhaps, knowledgeable personnel who operate the equipment. How can an architect ensure the best results?

**Maitland:** Plotting is a key issue because so much of that work has gone in-house. Each firm becomes a mini-print shop where those variables you mentioned must be reconciled. Today, over half our business is on-site services. The future wave is printing, and the cost of printing devices has been reduced dramatically, and typically architects want them in their offices. We have determined a way to best deal with this situation. Rather than the architects buying expensive printers, which quickly become obsolete, we basically take our print shop and put it in architects’ offices.